

Deadlock as Blues are checked

By STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 0, Ilford 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers' recent revival came up against a brick wall on Saturday — in the shape of Ilford. A goalless draw just had to come sooner or later this season and Wycombe battled away for 90 minutes but just couldn't break through.

But far more important than dropping one Isthmian League point, was the effect on the supporters. With "gates" at their lowest ebb for several years at Loakes Park, this type of performance is unlikely to recapture the interest of local spectators.

Wanderers will claim they were out of luck on Saturday — and rightly so. Apart from having one definite hand-ball penalty overruled, they came desperately close to scoring that all important goal.

Nothing, however, should be taken away from Ilford's performance. After many years in the doldrums, they are now beginning to come alive again under the guidance of manager Terry Howard. Having taken

both points with a 2-1 victory on their own ground, a share of the spoils at Loakes Park must have been most welcome.

Easily their man of the match was centre back Gordon Ferguson, signed from Ford United earlier in the term. Recently selected for the Scottish Amateur squad, Ferguson gave a commanding performance throughout and kept a tight rein on dangerman Larry Pritchard.

But while Ilford looked solid at the back, they also took charge of midfield where Wycombes Williams, Hutchinson and Birdseye could not match the work rate of the Ilford trio. Jeff Bookman particularly caught the eye while veteran Ken Pope was always at the right place at the right time.

Wanderers just couldn't seem to capture the form that gave them three goals in the second half against Sutton last week. The return of Tony Amos to the front three didn't come off — their lack of height again being exposed.

It certainly wasn't for want of trying that the Blues failed to score. The first corner of the match had Ilford in trouble when John Delaney's header was cleared off the line. Delaney's presence for dead ball situations emphasised the need for permanent height in attack.

Ilford hit back when McGillicuddy shot wide after a scramble but in the 26th minute Wycombe should have taken the lead. Amos took a throw-in on

the right and Ferguson deliberately handled inside his penalty area. Referee Downey waved play on.

Four minutes later Larry Pritchard dispossessed Paul James when taking a goalkick but the referee ruled that he had fouled the 'keeper.

Then in the 32nd minute, James punched out a free kick to the feet of Birdseye whose first time shot on the volley seemed a certain goal until "that man" Ferguson leapt high to head the ball away from under the crossbar.

Wycombe's frustration continued into the second half, with Ilford offering only occasional danger in attack. After 53 minutes Horseman put in a good

run and cross to Pritchard but although the England International beat James' attempted punch, the ball went fractionally wide.

Amos had the ball in the net in the 63rd minute but was ruled off side and then in the space of five minutes Wanderers almost broke the deadlock three times. Pritchard was robbed in the nick of time by Ferguson, Hutchinson fired into the side netting and Delaney powered a header just past the post.

Hollifield replaced Amos with ten minutes remaining and during that time, another Wycombe appeal for a penalty was turned down. Pritchard appeared to be held when going through but despite several protests, Mr. Downey was unmoved.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Gamblin, I. Rundle, J. Delaney, D. Bullock, R. Williams, P. Birdseye, J. Hutchinson, A. Horseman, L. Pritchard, A. Amos. (Sub.: M. Hollifield 80 mins.).

ILFORD: P. James, D. Collins, G. Ferguson, J. Rich, D. Gulver, K. Pope, A. Noonan, J. Bookman, P. McGillicuddy (sub. J. Gormley 70 mins.), M. Taylor, R. Winter. Referee: C. Downey (Isleworth). Attendance: 982.